

3. (CLOU) QUANTITATIVELY, THE SOVIET PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN HAS NOT INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY DURING RECENT MONTHS, IN SPITE OF THE DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THE NUMBER OF SOVIET MILITARY ADVISORS REMAINS SLIGHTLY OVER 1,200 -- AND THERE ARE PROBABLY STILL ABOUT 2,500 CIVILIAN ADVISORS FROM THE USSR IN THE COUNTRY. ALTHOUGH THE SOVIET EMBASSY DENIES IT, WE BELIEVE THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF THEIR DEPENDENTS HAVE BEEN EVACUATED TO THE USSR.

4. (CLOU) QUALITATIVELY, THE INFLUENCE OF SOVIET ADVISORS APPEARS TO HAVE BECOME MORE PRONOUNCED IN RECENT WEEKS, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE VISIT OF THE USSR'S GENERAL A.A. YEPISHEV, CHIEF OF THE MAIN POLITICAL DIRECTORATE OF THE SOVIET ARMED FORCES, EARLY IN APRIL. ALTHOUGH THE ANNOUNCED REASON FOR YEPISHEV'S VISIT WAS TO UPGRADE THE "POLITICAL EDUCATION" OF THE AFGHAN FORCES, HE CAME WITH A LARGE STAFF OF SOVIET OFFICIALS WHO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE LOOKED INTO SEVERAL ASPECTS OF MILITARY SUPPORT FOR THE AFGHAN ARMY AND AIR FORCE. WE ARE ALSO AWARE OF INCREASED SOVIET GUIDANCE IN VARIOUS CIVILIAN MINISTRIES.

5. (CLOU) THE BEST QUALITY EQUIPMENT WHICH THE USSR HAS PROVIDED TO AFGHANISTAN THUS FAR HAVE BEEN MIG-21 AND SU-7 FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, MI-24 HIND-TYPE HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS AND T-62 TANKS. IN SPITE OF FREQUENT RUMORS TO THE CONTRARY, THE AFGHANS HAVE NOT BEEN SUPPLIED WITH MIG-23 AIRCRAFT.

6. (CLOU) THE EMBASSY HAS WEIGHED THE WIDESPREAD RUMORS THAT SOVIET PILOTS FLY SOME OF THE OPERATIONAL MISSION OF AFGHAN AIRCRAFT AGAINST GUERRILLA TARGETS. WE HAVE NO SOLID EVIDENCE RULING OUT THIS POSSIBILITY, BUT, UNTIL SUCH AN AIRCRAFT CRASHES WITH SOVIET PERSONNEL ON BOARD, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO SUBSTANTIATE THESE RUMORS. BECAUSE SOME OF THE NEW EQUIPMENT, SUCH AS THE MI-24 GUNSHIP, IS MORE SOPHISTICATED THAN THE OLDER AFGHAN ARMAMENT, SOVIET PERSONNEL ARE BELIEVED TO BE ENGAGED IN INTENSIVE TRAINING ACTIVITY. THERE ARE SEVERAL REPORTS THAT THE MI-24s HAVE BEEN USED OPERATIONALLY AGAINST THE INSURGENTS. BECAUSE THIS IS A SOPHISTICATED WEAPON SYSTEM, WE DOUBT THERE HAS BEEN SUFFICIENT TIME TO TRAIN AFGHANS TO FLY THEM ALONE. THEREFORE, IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT SOVIETS COULD BE HELPING TO FLY THOSE MI-24s BEING USED OPERATIONALLY, AS WELL AS PROVIDING TRAINING TO AFGHAN PILOTS.

7. (CLOU) BECAUSE THERE ARE SOVIET MILITARY ADVISORS ASSIGNED THROUGHOUT THE AFGHAN GROUND FORCES -- IN ALL CASES DOWN TO THE BATTALION LEVEL, AND ALSO WITH SEVERAL SMALL SPECIALIZED UNITS, IT WOULD BE UNUSUAL IF SOVIET MILITARY PERSONNEL WERE NOT CAUGHT UP IN MILITARY OPERATIONS FROM TIME TO TIME.

8. (CLOU) THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION IS: CAN WE EXPECT TO SEE SOVIET COMBAT TROOPS ENTER AFGHAN COMBAT? WE CAN ONLY OBSERVE THAT THAT POSSIBILITY CANNOT BE EXCLUDED.

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RUQKRA/AMEMBASSY JIDDA 288
RUDTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1561
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1685
RUSSAE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 6797
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ARTICLE 4 OF THE NEW AFGHAN-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP TREATY OF DECEMBER 3, 1978, PROVIDES THAT THE TWO PARTIES "...SHALL CONSULT EACH OTHER, AND TAKE, BY AGREEMENT, APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO ENSURE THE SECURITY, INDEPENDENCE, AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THE TWO COUNTRIES." THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES: "IN THE INTERESTS OF STRENGTHENING THE DEFENSE CAPACITY OF THE HOIN CONTRACTING PARTIES, THEY SHOULD CONTINUE TO DEVELOP COOPERATION IN THE MILITARY FIELD ON THE BASIS OF APPROPRIATE AGREEMENTS CONCLUDED BETWEEN THEM"

9 (LOW) MANY DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS HAVE COMMENTED THAT THE CAREFUL PHRASEOLOGY OF ARTICLE 4 SEEMS TO ENABLE THE SOVIET UNION TO HAVE ITS CAKE AND EAT IT TOO. IT APPEARS TO PERMIT SOVIET FORCES TO ENTER AFGHANISTAN IN PEACETIME, BUT ALSO CONTAINS ENOUGH ESCAPE LANGUAGE TO ALLOW THE SOVIETS TO IGNORE A KHALQI CALL OF HELP. IT IS RUMORED THAT SENIOR SOVIET MILITARY OFFICERS HAVE GIVEN THE KHALQIS ORAL ASSURANCES THAT THE USSR WOULD DO EVERYTHING NECESSARY TO PROTECT THE REVOLUTION. WHILE THE KHALQIS, IN CONVERSATIONS WITH FOREIGN DIPLOMATS AND THE FOREIGN PRESS (KABUL 3538) HAVE PROFESSED TO BELIEVE THEMSELVES "ASSURED" THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD HELP THEM HANDLE "INTERFERENCE" (WHETHER FOREIGN OR DOMESTIC IS NEVER SPECIFIED), IT IS NOT APPARENT WHETHER THEY REALLY POSSESS THAT CERTITUDE. THE TARAKI-AMIN LEADERSHIP IS UNDOUBTEDLY AWARE THAT THERE ARE OTHER OPTIONS TO THEIR REGIME WAITING IN THE WINGS -- INCLUDING THE EXILED PARCHAMIST LEADERS.

10. (CLOU) ALTHOUGH THIS EMBASSY WOULD DEFER TO EMBASSY MOSCOW'S EXPERTISE IN ANALYZING THE POSSIBLE SOVIET VIEWPOINT OF THE AFGHAN SITUATION, WHICH THE KREMLIN MUST REGARD BOTH AS A MESS AND AN OPPORTUNITY, THIS TOPIC IS A PRIME SUBJECT OF SPECULATION AT KABUL. SOME ARGUE THAT THE USSR WOULD WANT TO AVOID BECOMING BOGGED DOWN IN THE VIETNAM-TYPE QUAGMIRE OF AN AFGHAN CIVIL WAR, WHILE OTHERS BELIEVE THAT WE MIGHT BE AT THE THRESHOLD OF A 1968 CZECHOSLOVAKIA-TYPE SITUATION. THE USSR MIGHT DECIDE THAT IT HAS TO MOVE BECAUSE "THE AFGHAN REVOLUTION IS ENDANGERED." IN THIS CONNECTION, REPEATED SOVIET CHARGES OF INTERFERENCE BY THE U.S., CHINA, PAKISTAN, AND OTHER STATES COULD BE INTENDED TO LAY THE PROPAGANDA AND "LEGAL" GROUNDWORK FOR SUCH A MOVE. ADDITIONALLY, REPEATED KHALQI COMPLAINTS THAT IRANIAN AND PAKISTANI TROOPS "IN AFGHAN DRESS" ARE OPERATING IN AFGHANISTAN COULD ALSO BE PART OF THIS POLITICAL PREPARATION.

11. (CLOU) WHY WOULD THE USSR DECIDE TO INTERVENE? AFGHANISTAN, UNLIKE ANGOLA, ETHIOPIA, OR YEMEN, BORDERS ON THE SOVIET UNION ITSELF. INDEED, THIS TURBULENT COUNTRY ABUTS SEVERAL SENSITIVE, MUSLIM, CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS OF THE USSR. MOSCOW IS UNDERSTANDABLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF AN UNBROKEN BAND OF CONSERVATIVE ISLAMIC STATES STRETCHING ALONG OR NEAR ITS SOUTHERN FRONTIER, FROM IRAN TO PAKISTAN -- AND THIS COULD HAPPEN SHOULD AN IKHWAN-DOMINATED ALLIANCE EVER TOPPLE THE KHALQI REGIME. THE SOVIET UNION ALSO HAS ENORMOUS POLITICAL, PRESTIGE, ECONOMIC, STRATEGIC, AND MILITARY INVESTMENTS IN KHALQI AFGHANISTAN. MOSCOW WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO LET THESE BECOME LOST WITHOUT SOME EFFORT TO SAVE THEM. ON THE OTHER HAND, ALMOST ANY AFGHAN REGIME WHICH MIGHT SUCCEED THE KHALQI REGIME WOULD PROBABLY FEEL IT WOULD HAVE TO COME TO TERMS WITH THE GEOPOLITICAL FACT OF THE COUNTRY'S GREAT NORTHERN NEIGHBOR -- AS HAVE VARIED AFGHAN GOVERNMENTS IN THE PAST SIXTY YEARS.

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